

Covenant Christian Reformed Church Profile

Church Information:

Name: Covenant Christian Reformed Church

Location of church: Appleton, Wisconsin

Classical Church Counselor: Josh Van Engen (Christ Community Church, Sheboygan)

Search Committee Contact:

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Community Setting:

Location:

- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Small Town
- ☐ Metropolitan
- ☐ Suburban
- ☐ Inner City
- ☒ Small City

Function:

- ☒ Industrial
- ☒ College/University
- ☐ Agricultural
- ☐ Recreational
- ☐ Military
- ☐ Bedroom Community

Growth:

- ☒ Growing
- ☐ Static
- ☐ Declining

Approximate population of community: 75,000 in Appleton; 250,000 in the
greater Fox River Valley

CRCNA Profile: <https://www.crcna.org/churches/9309>

Church Profile:**We are open to:**

☐ Male and Female pastors ☐ Female pastors ☒ Male pastors only

List all staff positions: Pastor (vacant); we also currently have an administrative team of 2 in place to share the weekly church administration and office duties

Position available: Pastor **Date of vacancy:** November 2023

General position description:

Covenant CRC, Appleton, WI, seeks to fill our vacant position of Pastor. We are looking for a pastor who is ordained or becoming ordained in the Christian Reformed Church and who eagerly and confidently proclaims the Word of God through preaching, teaching, prayer and administration of the sacraments. Our Pastor will serve God and the church through pastoral care and visionary leadership and will demonstrate a firm understanding and appreciation of the doctrines of the Reformed faith. We seek someone excited to bring all of life under the lordship of Christ, for the great goal of cosmic history to establish the Glory of the Lord!

☒ Full-time ☐ Part-time

Bi-vocational position?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Number of years preferred of ministry experience: 5 years

Required languages: English

Church Demographics:

Average Sunday attendance: 85

Active adult professing members: 58

Profile of congregation:

Age (years):

0-11: 15%	12-18: 13%	19-24: 3%	25-34: 12%
35-49: 10%	50-64: 29%	65+: 17%	

Occupation:

Business: 12%	Professional: 25%
Healthcare: 7%	Trades: 5%
Education: 7%	Stay-at-home parent: 7%
Retired: 30%	Other: 7%

Percentage of members belonging to the congregation:

Less than 5 years: 20%
5-10 years: 18%
10 or more years: 62%

Racial/ethnic composition of congregation and surrounding community:

Our racial/ethnic composition is largely white/non-Hispanic. According to recent US Census data, the composition of the Fox River valley is: 84% white, 5% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 2% Black, 3% other.

Composition of congregation:

- ☐ Mono-cultural
- ☒ Multi-cultural
- ☐ Specific ethnicity

List the last three persons in this position:

- 1 Rev. Dr. Mark Pluimer (2006-2023)
- 2 Rev. Dr. Ed Laarman (1992-2005)
- 3 Rev. Clark Van Halsema (1987-1991)

Worship:**How are members involved in planning and participation in the liturgy/worship?**

Worship planning is done by the pastor and a lay worship coordinator, with oversight by the elders. Participation includes the pastor, lay musicians, and other worship leaders who regularly lead the call to worship and prayers during the service.

Describe the worship services in your church:

Our order of worship typically includes a Call to worship with Scripture, congregational singing, confession and/or intercessory prayer, preaching, a song of response, and a blessing. After the blessing, male and female church leaders are available to pray individually with people as they desire. Congregational singing is accompanied by the piano and frequently a guitar and on occasion other instruments. Vocal soloists and a choir are used on occasion. Our singing includes a blend of traditional and contemporary songs.

Describe the discipleship practices in your church for all ages:

Discipleship programs and practices include Sunday School for children of all ages and adults, GEMS, Cadets, youth group, Covenant Friends (a ministry for persons with cognitive impairments), Coffee Break, small group ministries and Bible studies. We periodically offer a New Members Class, Profession of Faith Class, family/fellowship events and outreach efforts.

Financial:

Present annual budget: \$289,650

Last year's annual budget: \$299,416

Percentage of financial obligations met (last complete year reported):

Budget:	100%
Denominational Ministry Shares:	100%
Classical Ministry Shares:	100%

Facilities:

Covenant CRC facilities include a sanctuary and classroom space for our Sunday School. Outdoor space includes a fellowship area, playground, and community garden.

Are your buildings adequate for your ministries?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is a building program projected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the church own a parsonage?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Location of office or study:	In church/on site	

Church Characteristics:

[Check which one(s) are closest to your church's characteristics]

Presently, the FOCUS OF OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY is

	Community exclusively	Community primarily	Community & current members/ participants equally	Current members/ participants primarily	Current members/ participants exclusively	
External	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Internal

In our church, the WORSHIP SERVICE IS DESIGNED FOR

	Designed for unchurched	Emphasis on unchurched	Unchurched and believers	Emphasis on believers	Designed for believers	
Unchurched	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Churched

In our church, the STYLE OF MUSIC used in the worship service is

	Contemporary	Mostly contemporary	Blended	Mostly traditional	Traditional	
Contemporary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Traditional

In our church, LEADERSHIP is generally provided by the

	Predominantly lay leaders	Frequently lay leaders	Lay leaders & pastoral staff share leadership	Lay leaders function under pastoral staff	Predominantly pastoral staff	
Congregational members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pastoral staff

Our church seeks to ENCOURAGE SPIRITUAL GROWTH through

	No specific ministries	Ministries for a few groups	Ministries for selected groups	Ministries for most groups	Ministries for all groups	
Informal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Formal

In our church, EVANGELISM STRATEGIES AND METHODS are

	Predominantly unplanned	Generally unplanned	Equal emphasis	Generally planned	Predominantly planned	
Unplanned	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Planned

Our church is representative of the ECONOMIC DIVERSITY of our community

	Strongly representative	Mostly representative	Moderately representative	Mildly representative	Weakly representative	
High representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low representation

Our church is representative of the ETHNIC DIVERSITY of our community

	Strongly representative	Mostly representative	Moderately representative	Mildly representative	Weakly representative	
High representation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Low representation

Our church's RESPONSE TO COMPASSION, MERCY, AND JUSTICE NEEDS is

	Commitment to church-based action	Encouragement of church-based action	Church-based and personal action	Encouragement of personal action	Commitment to personal action	
Church-based	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal

Our church's MISSIONAL FOCUS is

	All local	Mostly local	Equally local and global	Mostly global	All global	
Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Global

Narrative:

In what ways does your church participate in ecumenical activities?

We support a variety of local organizations that promote God-honoring causes within our community including VIDA (provides alternatives to abortion primarily to low income expectant mothers), Habitat for Humanity, World Relief Fox Valley, Pillars (homeless shelter and low-income, affordable housing resources), Wisconsin Inmate Education, LEAVEN (a non-profit providing resources for people in financial distress), and Help for the Homeless. A Congolese congregation, Revival Unity International Church, worships in our building on Sunday afternoons with which we have limited cooperation, primarily in children's programs.

Reflect on your strengths/gifts as a church:

- Our worship is enhanced by gifted musicians, and by beautiful and enthusiastic congregational singing.
- Our congregation is comprised of regularly attending, committed members who are present and engaged in worship.
- Our fellowship enjoys the dynamics that a wide diversity of denominational backgrounds brings to our membership. Our members give generously of their time, money, and selves.
- Our church is blessed by many gifted and humble lay leaders. Our ministry for the cognitively impaired (Friends) is mature and robust, exceptionally so for a church of our size.
- Our congregation is age-diverse, offering something for people in all seasons of life.

Reflect on your passions as a church:

- We are passionate about growing together through God's Word. In all aspects of our worship - preaching, singing, praying - our desire is to be faithful to God's Word. Our discipleship programs for both children and adults aim for faithfulness to God's Word. We believe that God's Word compels us as believers to faithfulness, and that His Word attracts those whom He has called, both church members and those who are searching.
- As a church community, we seek to share our lives together, with mutual upbuilding in prayer, celebrating together and supporting one another through life's struggles.
- We are passionate about using music to include many congregants in leading worship, especially in nurturing young musicians. Music has been especially effective in integrating teenagers in the body of Christ.
- We are passionate about fellowshiping together and enjoy many opportunities to gather, including potlucks, bridal showers, baby showers, and other events important to our members.

List specific problems with which your congregation struggles:

- We struggle to see ways to reach our community with Christ.
- We struggle with stability in leadership of our youth programs. For various reasons, we have experienced high turnover in the leadership of this critical ministry of our church. With new volunteers and leadership, we look forward to growing and giving new vision to our teen programs and supporting our youth through this challenging time in their lives.
- We struggle to increase congregational engagement with our Congolese ministry.
- We want our children to root themselves in their identity as God's beloved and grow in faith and wisdom. We have realized that children's programming isn't working the way it used to work, and we are re-building our vision to support our commitment to the next generation.

Do you have a recently-articulated mission/vision for ministry? ☒ Yes ☐ No

The council has started some discussion and collecting opinions.

What has been the most interesting and challenging event in the life of your church in the last three years?

Since the mid-1990's our church policy, in alignment with CRCNA synodical decisions, has allowed women to serve as elders. In 2023, that policy became a divisive issue with some members which created tension in the congregation. Our church's position on women in leadership has not changed, and we currently seek a pastor who is willing to work with women elders.

List major goals that this congregation has set for itself or opportunities the congregation anticipates:

Our major goals include:

- Further grow our relationship with the growing Congolese population in the Fox Valley to exalt Christ in our community. This relationship offers ample opportunity to be "the hands and feet of Christ" in very practical ways.
 - We have 17 new members from 2 extended families as of Aug 2025. They are immigrants from Congo, originally from the CRC Congo. They worship with us on Sunday mornings.
 - We are bridging cultural gaps and challenging language barriers, but look for more ways to fully welcome them into our church community.
- Evangelism and service opportunities that would bring us into places where we can build relationships with people who don't know Jesus.
- Improve our youth and young adult ministries through stable, coordinated leadership and sound, age-appropriate Bible teaching and fellowship.

Describe what being Christians of Reformed accent means to you:

First and foremost, being Reformed has the distinction of exulting in the sovereignty of God over all things. "All things" means everything from life, death, salvation, and every working of every thing in the universe. One way this sovereignty is expressed is through the concept of God's kingdom. All Heaven and Earth is His dominion and there is nowhere and no-thing that the sovereignty of God does not impact. We are His servants and we operate in His service in every sphere of our lives.

Secondly, being Reformed has a particular connection to the "5 Solas of the Reformation." By faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone, by the Scriptures alone, for the glory of God alone are all foundational doctrines for our faith. We are committed to the Scriptures as God's revealed word to provide full authority over all areas of life so we are not swayed by the winds of culture that threaten to tear us away from God and His truth.

Describe your understanding of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination:

We agree with the CRCNA's description of the relationship between the local church and the Christian Reformed denomination. Broadly that is, "Local church councils delegate authority to classes to make decisions for a regional group of churches, and classes delegate authority to synod—the broadest assembly—to make decisions for all the classes and churches in the denomination, but those decisions vary greatly in 'their extent of jurisdiction, in their nature of authority, in their distinction of purposes, in the measure of agreement expected, and in their use and function.'" (CRCNA website) Within this framework, Appleton CRC operates day-to-day as a fairly autonomous church, making decisions about ministry offerings and congregational priorities that we believe are right for our place and time. The Church Council is charged with discerning vision and direction

while responding to congregational needs and concerns. We do this in relationship with the broader assemblies of Wisconsin Classis and Synod, in which we are active.

Identify some of the challenges facing Christians and Christian churches today:

Christians and Christian churches face enormous pressure to conform with cultural norms across a broad range of human activity, whether sexuality or materialism or simple civility. This pressure challenges us as the body of Christ to intentionally and boldly retain our distinctiveness as God's people. (1 Peter 2:9-10) Only in this way will we be the salt and light of the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)

We also find that today's culture includes a growing lack of commitment to aligning oneself formally with organizations, whether work or social or religious. For the church, this manifests in people who are increasingly uninterested in church membership and who are reluctant to commit to service.

Describe key elements of your church's history which have shaped your fellowship today:

Ministry of four Pastors in forty-four years

God's provision of four pastors who provided sound doctrine, pastoral care, preaching, encouragement, and leadership which guided the flock to bring glory to God. Each individual provided unique talents and abilities needed to motivate individuals to serve and achieve spiritual growth as a congregation. Not one of the four provided all that was needed by each person in the congregation at all times, but each was chosen by God to provide vital lessons, healing and growth that contributed to the church we are today.

Three building expansions to accommodate growth and additional ministries.

The passive solar and simple design of the original building surrounded by a large lot being restored to a prairie were unusual for the time and attracted some interest in the community. Sunday school classes and Children's Worship were held in the Pastor's office, other classes and ministries had to share the main worship space and the two classrooms. The first expansion added a larger nursery and a basement for more classrooms and meeting space. The second building project added a larger nursery with its own toilet/changing table facilities and a vital education wing with classrooms on the main level as well as creating accessible accommodations for all abilities. The third addition created a new worship center with adjacent gathering space and freed up the former worship center for a youth center and meeting room. The kitchen was enlarged and additional storage space was reclaimed from the office space that was upgraded and moved. Since our last building expansion, God has provided significant financial blessings such that our building loan principal will soon be paid off.

God's provision of individuals with spiritual gifts who demonstrate fruits of the Spirit were and are vital to establishing and maintaining our church body.

Romans 12:4-5: For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. It is stated elsewhere in this profile that we are, in many ways, an unusually diverse body of believers. Similarly, our ministries to the body and the community have been effective because members of the body have exercised a diversity of gifts. Gifts of **hospitality** demonstrated by families that have welcomed and enfolded newcomers while **encouraging** others to do likewise. Council members and other church leaders have displayed **leadership** and **discernment** through Covenant's major sanctuary expansion program in 2016, through the disruptive COVID experience beginning in March 2020, and most recently through our experience of losing both our pastor and associate pastor. Gifts of **teaching** and **wisdom** have been evident in various bible studies, Sunday school classes, special courses and events. **Serving, Grace and Mercy** are demonstrated by our Deacons and those who volunteer. Covenant Church consistently declares the Glory of God through music. Generous and amazingly talented musicians have performed and mentored younger musicians. Students are often given opportunities to perform.

Leadership:

How many council members does your church typically have?	9
What is the length of term for council members?	3 years
How often does the full council meet?	Monthly

What subgroups of council exist, how do they function, and how often do they meet?

Council typically consists of 5 elders including the pastor, and 4 deacons. Both the elders and deacons meet at least monthly, then join to meet as a full Council each month.

Additional Notes about Appleton:

Appleton is the largest growing city in the greater Fox Cities, a thriving string of smaller cities and villages built along the scenic and historic Fox River and Lake Winnebago. The area is home to a wide variety of industries; large employers include paper mills, insurance companies, healthcare, and manufacturing. Festivals such as Mile of Music, Oktoberfest, Lifest (Oshkosh), Experimental Aircraft Association (Oshkosh), and farmer's markets attract many people to the area. Appleton is home to the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, multiple museums, and musical attractions. Residents have many parks and nature centers to choose from. More active pastimes for residents include hiking, biking, cross country skiing, kayaking, boating, fishing, and golf. The Appleton area has many public schools (which allow open enrollment), private faith-based parochial K-12 schools, and an active homeschool community. Appleton offers

opportunities for higher education and employment at Lawrence University (a liberal arts college), nearby campuses for the University of Wisconsin in Oshkosh and Green Bay, and the Fox Valley Technical and Northeast Wisconsin Technical Colleges. Pastoral candidates may consider a wide array of residential options, from quiet rural countryside to established city neighborhoods, to modern downtown or river condos or apartments, all within minutes of the church.

Compensation:

Compensation for this position will be commensurate with experience and consistent with pastor salaries in our geographical regions. The average recent annual increases for our previous Pastor were in the 3-4% range.

Housing:

☒ Housing allowance ☐ Parsonage only ☐ Either of the above

Benefits and Expenses:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pension | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuing Education funds |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medical insurance | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuing Education time allotted |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social Security | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sabbatical policy in place |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Travel/mileage | <input type="checkbox"/> Life insurance |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Potential HSA contribution | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual vacation: up to 4 weeks, depending on experience | |